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Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
/090 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:EOJONES:RGH:DP
APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN
S/PRS - MR. BROWN (INFO)
H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA - MS. GRIFFIN
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
----------112158Z 013612 /73
O 112042Z FEB 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
USINT BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCEUR

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - FEBRUARY 10

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR FEBRUARY 10, 1977:

SPOKESMAN: I WOULD LIKE TO READ INTO THE RECORD A STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT YESTERDAY EVENING WITH REGARD TO THE DEATH OF QUEEN ALIYA.

WE ARE DEEPLY SADDENED BY THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF QUEEN ALIYA OF JORDAN AND OF THE OTHERS IN HER PARTY. IT IS A TRAGIC LOSS FOR KING HUSSEIN AND FOR HIS COUNTRY. THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY VANCE WILL BE CONVEYING THEIR PERSONAL CONDOLENCES TO THE KING AND HIS FAMILY, TO THE FAMILIES OF THE OTHER VICTIMS, AND TO THE JORDANIAN PEOPLE.

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THAT IS THE END OF THE DEPARTMENT'S MESSAGE AND THE SECRETARY HAS INDEED SENT HIS PERSONAL MESSAGE TO KING HUSSEIN.

Q. FRED, CAN I GO BACK TO THE MIDDLE EAST TRIP?

A. ALL RIGHT. DEPART AT 11:00 P.M. ON THE 14TH, WHICH IS MONDAY, FROM ANDREWS.

ARRIVE TEL AVIV THE EVENING OF THE 15TH?

Q. WHERE IS HE STOPPING?

A. REFUELING EN ROUTE IN THE AZORES.

A. LEAVE TEL AVIV THE MORNING OF THE 17TH AND ARRIVE CAIRO SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

LEAVE CAIRO THE MORNING OF THE 18TH AND STOP BRIEFLY IN BEIRUT.

THEN ARRIVE AMMAN LATE THE AFTERNOON OF THE 18TH.

LEAVE AMMAN AROUND NOON TIME ON THE 19TH.

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ARRIVE RIYADH MID-AFTERNOON THE 19TH.

LEAVE RIYADH LATE MORNING THE 20TH.

ARRIVE DAMASCUS SHORTLY THEREAFTER.

THEN LEAVE DAMASCUS AROUND NOON TIME ON THE 21ST, AND GET BACK TO ANDREWS IN MID-EVENING THE 21ST.

ALL TIMES LOCAL.

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THAT IS ABOUT AS CLOSE AS I CAN PIN IT DOWN FOR YOU.

Q. WELL, FROM THAT VERY HELPFUL SCHEDULE, WHICH IS MORE THAN WE HAVE EVER GOTTEN IN ADVANCE OF A TRIP, I MIGHT SAY, CAN YOU TELL US IF THE TALKS IN EGYPT WILL BE IN CAIRO? PRESIDENT SADAT HAS SEVERAL HOMES AND PALACES, AND HE SORT OF MOVES AROUND.

A. I REALLY DO NOT KNOW.

Q. IN BEIRUT CAN YOU TELL US IF THERE WILL BE SOME AIR-PORT RENDEZVOUS UNDER HEAVY GUARD OR WILL THERE BE A REAL MEETING INSIDE THE CITY AT SOME RESIDENCE?

A. I CANNOT GIVE YOU ANY DETAILS ON THE BEIRUT STOP.

Q. BUT IT WILL BE BEIRUT. IT WILL BE BEIRUT. IT WON'T BE RAYAK AIR FORCE BASE, OR ANYTHING OF THAT SORT?

A. I CANNOT GIVE YOU ANY DETAILS ON THE STOP IN BEIRUT. IT IS VERY SHORT AND I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO GO INTO DETAILS.

Q. BUT YOU CERTAINLY WOULD RULE OUT ASWAN OR ANY OTHER CITY?

A. I HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THE MEETING IN EGYPT IS GOING TO BE ANYWHERE EXCEPT CAIRO.

Q. IS THERE ANY CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO PUTTING OFF THE DECISION ON THE CONCUSSION BOMBS SALE TO ISRAEL BEYOND NEXT WEEK?

SINCE SECRETARY VANCE WILL BE TRAVELING IN THE AREA, PRESI-DENT CARTER INDICATED EARLIER THIS WEEK THE DECISION WILL BE COMING WHILE HE IS TRAVELING.
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A. THE PRESIDENT HAS GIVEN THE LAST WORD ON THAT SUBJECT TWO DAYS AGO AND I AM NOT GOING TO GO BEYOND WHAT HE SAID WITH REGARD TO THE DECISION.

Q. FRED, ON THAT SAME SUBJECT, DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT TO THE ALLEGATION THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, SPECIFICALLY ROY ATHERTON LEAKED A REPORT ON IT AROUND THE WHITE HOUSE?

A. IF YOU ARE REFERRING TO THE ARTICLE BY MR. SAFIRE, I WOULD SAY THAT THE ALLEGATIONS IN THIS ARTICLE ARE TOTALLY WITHOUT FOUNDATION.

I WOULD COMMENT ON THE AD HOMINEM PEJORATIVE ASSERTIONS REGARDING ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON. THE CHARACTERI-ZATION OF MR. ATHERTON AS A "LEAKER" AND A "SYCOPHANT", AND AN "UNREPENTANT REPRIMANDEE" IS SCURRILOUS.

Q. CAN YOU REPEAT THAT?

Q. HE IS NONE OF THOSE THINGS? (LAUGHTER) IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE SAYING?

A. THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT I AM SAYING, AND FURTHER THAT THE ALLEGATIONS THAT MR. ATHERTON HAS ACTED TO UNDERMINE OR CIRCUMVENT THE POLICIES OF THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY ARE FALSE AND REPRESENT AN INSULT TO A DEDICATED,

ABLE AND TRUSTED GOVERNMENT OFFICER.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON HAS HAD AND CONTINUES TO HAVE THE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Q. THE STATEMENT, THE WORD "SCURRILOUS" AND THE REST OF IT, IS THAT YOU SAYING IT OR IS THAT YOU IN THE NAME OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE?
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A. IN THE NAME OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Q. THE WHOLE THING IS IN THE NAME OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE; IS THAT CORRECT?

A. THAT IS CORRECT.

Q. HE READ THE ARTICLE?

A. HE DID.

Q. COULD YOU COMMENT ON MR. OBERDORFER'S STORY THIS MORN-ING THAT AN ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN WORKED OUT IN SOUTHERN

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LEBANON?

A. I CANNOT ADD VERY MUCH TO WHAT WE HAVE SAID ON THIS SUBJECT IN THE RECENT PAST WITH REGARD TO SOUTHERN LEBANON EXCEPT TO REPEAT THAT OUR POLICY REMAINS TO BE IN CONTACT WITH THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED AND TO BE CERTAIN THAT EACH UNDERSTANDS THE POSITION OF THE OTHERS.

Q. DO YOU FEEL THE PRESENT SITUATION IS ANY LESS DANGEROUS THAN IT WAS A DAY AGO OR TWO DAYS AGO OR THREE DAYS AGO?

A. I WOULD NOT OFFER AN ESTIMATE ON THAT. OUR HOPE IS THAT THE PARTIES WILL AVOID DE-STABILIZING DEVELOPMENTS IN A SENSITIVE AREA AND THAT CONFRONTATIONS WILL BE AVOIDED, AND THIS IS BASICALLY WHAT WE HAVE BEEN SAYING RECENTLY. I CANNOT OFFER YOU ANY MORE THAN THAT.

Q. FRED, DOES THIS GOVERNMENT HAVE ANY INFORMATION THAT THE SYRIAN TROOPS NEAR NABATIYAH HAVE OR DO SOON INTEND TO MOVE NORTH OF THE LITANI RIVER?

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A. I DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT; BUT, AS IN THE PAST, I AM NOT GOING TO GET INTO A DAILY SITREP ON MILITARY MOVEMENTS.

Q. THIS IS MORE THAN A DAILY SITREP. IT'S A RATHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT THAT WE'RE ASKING ABOUT.

A. YES. I HAVE NOTHING ON THAT.

Q. -- YOUR USE OF THE WORD "DESTABILIZING" IS A LITTLE AMBIGUOUS, AND MAYBE EVEN PROVOCATIVE, BECAUSE, AS YOU KNOW, THE SYRIAN TROOPS WERE MOVED IN THERE OSTENSIBLY TO STABILIZE THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. SO IT SOUNDS AS IF YOU APPROVE OF THE MOVE; IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO S SAY?

A. NO, I AM NOT TRYING TO SAY THAT. I AM JUST GOING TO STAND ON THE WORDS THAT I HAVE JUST GIVEN YOU.

Q. WELL, YOU USUALLY DO; BUT DID THEIR PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON STABILIZE THE LEBANESE SITUATION, IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW, AND WOULD THEIR REMOVAL DESTABILIZE THE SITUATION?

A. WE HAVE NOT IN THE PAST AND WE ARE NOT GOING TO NOW GET INTO CHARACTERIZING THE VARIOUS ACTS OF THE PARTIES. SO I CANNOT ADDRESS YOUR QUESTION.

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Q. WELL, I MEAN YOUR COMMENT SPEAKS IN TERMS OF THE NEED FOR STABILITY. UNFORTUNATELY, OR FORTUNATELY, YOU'VE CHOSEN A WORD THAT CHARACTERIZES THE SYRIAN EXPLANATION FOR MOVING THE TROOPS IN -- WHICH SOUNDS VERY MUCH LIKE YOU AGREED WITH THAT ACTION AS BEING A STABILIZING ACTION.

NOW, WHEN ANDREW YOUNG SAID THE CUBAN TROOPS IN ANGOLA STABILIZED THE SITUATION, YOU WERE QUITE READY TO ADDRESS
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THAT. NO, I DON'T SEE WHY YOU CAN'T -- WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBSTITUTE A WORD FOR "STABILITY" OR DO YOU WANT TO SAY THEY STABILIZE THE SITUATION?

A. I WILL STICK WITH WHAT I HAVE SAID.

Q. SO THEY'RE A STABILIZING ELEMENT.

A. NO. I DID NOT SAY THAT.

Q. WHAT DID YOU SAY?

A. I SAID THE HOPE, AS FAR AS OUR POLICY IS CONCERNED, IS THAT DESTABILIZING DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS SENSITIVE AREA

WILL BE AVOIDED AND TO THAT END WE ARE URGING RESTRAINT ON THE PARTIES INVOLVED AND WE HOPE TO AVOID CONFRONTATIONS.

Q. WELL, WOULD THE REMOVAL OF THE TROOPS DESTABILIZE THE SITUATION?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO GO BEYOND WHAT I HAVE SAID ON THIS.

Q. PUT THAT IN A CONTEXT. COULD YOU TELL US WHERE THE TROOPS CURRENTLY ARE AND HOW MANY OF THEM THERE ARE?

A. I REALLY CANNOT GET INTO THAT.

Q. YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY ARE? ARE THEY IN NABATIYAH? ARE THEY SOUTH OF THE LITANI? ARE THEY OUTSIDE NABATIYAH?

A. THE LAST TIME I ANSWERED THAT QUESTION I SAID THEY WERE IN THE VICINITY OF NABATIYAH; AND I HAVE NO INFORMATION TO THE CONTRARY.

Q. ARE YOU SATISFIED THAT THIS COUNTRY IS GETTING THE
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COOPERATION OF ALL THE PARTIES IN OUR MEDIATION EFFORTS? I MEAN TO SAY, IS THE SECRETARY SATISFIED WITH IT?

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A. I REALLY DO NOT KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THAT IN TERMS OF "ARE WE SATISFIED." WE ARE STAYING IN TOUCH -- IN CLOSE TOUCH. WE ARE EXCHANGING VIEWS. I WOULD NOT WANT TO SAY WE ARE SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED. I DO NOT THINK I CAN DO THAT.

Q. BUT YOU'RE NOT TAKING ANY ISSUE WITH DON'S STORY, WHICH INDICATED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS PLAYING A VERY KEY ROLE IN MEDIATING THIS DISPUTE --

A. LET US PUT IT IN A POSITIVE SENSE.

Q. -- AND THAT, IN FACT, WE -- THE UNITED STATES -- HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT SUCCESSFUL.

A. I AM NOT GOING TO TAKE ISSUE WITH MR. OBERDORFER. I WILL SIMPLY PUT IT IN MORE POSITIVE TERMS, IN THE WAY THAT I JUST HAVE WITH REGARD TO WHAT OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE AREA IS AND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO. I AM NOT GOING TO CRITICIZE MR. OBERDORFER'S ARTICLE. (LAUGHTER)

Q. HAVE WE BEEN SUCCESSFUL?

Q. CAN YOU TELL US THOUGH WHEN THE TROOPS ARE NO LONGER IN THE VICINITY OF NABATIYAH?

A. WILL I?

Q. CAN YOU.

A. CAN I?

Q. THAT;S WHAT THE WHOLE THING IS ALL ABOUT HERE.
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A. I DO NOT KNOW IF I WILL BE IN A POSITION TO DO THAT OR NOT, BERNIE.

Q. I MEAN DO WE HAVE TO ASK YOU EVERY HOUR ON THE HOUR?

A. NO, BUT AS I SAID TO BILL, WE NEVER HAVE -- AND I DO NOT THINK WE INTEND TO -- TO GET INTO THE SITUATION OF REPORTING WHERE PEOPLE ARE DAY IN AND DAY OUT. I MEAN IT IS JUST NOT OUR FUNCTION.

Q. NO, BUT IF THEY LEAVE NABATIYAH IT'S OVER.

Q. FRED, THAT'S NOT ACCURATE. AT THE TIME OF THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION AT THE BEGINNING, THE DEPARTMENT FREELY REPORTED WHAT ITS IMPRESSION OF TROOP STRENGTH WAS AND WHERE IT WAS.

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A. IN VERY GENERAL TERMS -- VERY GENERAL TERMS.

Q. SHALL I PUT THE QUESTION THIS WAY, FRED: WHEN SECRETARY VANCE GOES TO THE MIDDLE EAST NEXT WEEK, IS IT LIKELY THAT THE ISSUE OF SYRIAN TROOPS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON WILL BE SOMETHING THAT WILL PLAY MUCH OF A ROLE IN THE CONVERSATIONS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE OR WILL THAT ISSUE HAVE PASSED?

A. I CANNOT PREDICT WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN FOUR OR FIVE DAYS HENCE, BARRY. CERTAINLY THE ISSUE OF LEBANON IS GOING TO BE VERY IMPORTANT ONE IN HIS DISCUSSIONS, BUT I CANNOT TELL YOU WHETHER OR NOT -- WHAT OUR POSITION WILL BE OR WHAT CONSIDERATIONS WILL BE INVOLVED AT THE TIME THE SECRETARY HOLDS HIS DISCUSSIONS THERE. I REALLY CANNOT.

Q. FRED, HAVE YOU BEEN IN CONTACT WITH IRAQ -- DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY -- RECENTLY, AND IS THE PROBABLE RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS GOING TO BE A TOPIC OF THE NEXT,
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OF THE FORTHCOMING, TRIP OF MR. VANCE?

A. OUR POSITION REMAINS THAT THE UNITED STATES IS READY TO DISCUSS A RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS WITH IRAQ WHENEVER THE IRAQIS FEEL THEY ARE INTERESTED IN DOING SO.

Q. BUT HAVE THEY SAID --

A. WE HAVE SAID THAT EVER SINCE IRAQ SEVERED RELATIONS WITH US IN 1967.

Q. YES, BUT WHAT I'M ASKING YOU: THERE HAVE BEEN NEW DEVELOPMENTS -- DURING THE PAST FEW WEEKS.

A. WE HAVE HAD NO RECENT INDICATIONS THAT THEY ARE CONSIDERING RESTORING RELATIONS; BUT WERE THERE SUCH INDICATIONS, WE CERTAINLY WOULD EXPLORE THEM. I MIGHT ADD THAT IN RECENT YEARS OUR COMMERCIAL RELATIONS HAVE EXPANDED WITH IRAQ AND WE HAVE WELCOMED THAT DEVELOPMENT.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY YOU'VE HAD NO INDICATION, YOU MEAN YOU'VE HAD NO OFFICIAL INDICATIONS?

A. HAD NO RECENT INDICATIONS.

Q. INDIRECT INDICATION?

A. I JUST SAID WE HAD NO RECENT INDICATIONS.

Q. FRED, WHILE WE'RE PICKING UP AND DENYING COLUMNS (LAUGHTER), DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT ON THE EVANS AND NOVAK

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COLUMN OF YESTERDAY THAT SECRETARY VANCE IS ASKING CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO DELAY ACTION ON THE BOYCOTT LEGISLATION -- THE ARAB BOYCOTT LEGISLATION, BECAUSE IT MIGHT MUDDY HIS EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST RIGHT AWAY?

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A. I HAVE TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT. I THINK THE SECRETARY ADDRESSED THAT A WEEK AGO LAST MONDAY AT HIS NEWS CONFERENCE WHEN HE SAID THAT HE HAD REQUESTED THE COMMITTEE TO DELAY HIS TESTIMONY WITH REGARD TO THAT UNTIL HE GOT BACK FROM THE MIDDLE EAST --

Q. IS THAT ALL THAT'S INVOLVED?

A. -- AND HE IS SCHEDULED TO TESTIFY ON THE 28TH OF FEBRUARY.

Q. SO YOU'RE SAYING THE ONLY DELAY HE'S ASKED IS A DELAY OF A WEEK OR TWO, UNTIL HE COMES BACK AND CAN TESTIFY.

HE'S NOT MADE ANY LARGER SUGGESTION THAT THE WHOLE PROCESS OF ACTING ON THE BOYCOTT BE DEFERRED.

A. I DO NOT KNOW OF ANY OTHER MOVES HE HAS MADE ON THAT.

Q. ALL RIGHT. AND, SECONDLY, A SIMPLE QUESTION: WILL THERE BE AN AMBASSADOR NAMED TO ISRAEL SHORTLY? AND, IF NOT, WHAT'S HOLDING IT UP?

NOW THAT YOU HAVE MR. PARKER MOVING INTO PLACE, I THINK ISRAEL IS THE ONLY COUNTRY WITHOUT AN AMBASSADOR.

A. I DO NOT KNOW.

Q. YOU DON'T KNOW WHICH OFFICE --

A. ANY ANNOUNCEMENT ON THAT IS GOING TO COME OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE, AND I HAVE NO INDICATION AS TO WHO OR WHEN WITH REGARD TO THE NEXT AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL -- NOTHING WHATSOEVER.

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VANCE

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